

Message Text

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71

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 700

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SUMMARY: THE 1973 REGULAR CONGRESSIONAL SESSION, CHARACTERIZED BY UNUSUALLY HIGH ABSENTEEISM AND FREQUENT LACK OF QUORUMS, ENDED ON DECEMBER 20 IN A LAST MINUTE FLURRY OF ACTIVITY. IMPORTANT LEGISLATION APPROVED BY THE CONGRESS IS LISTED BELOW. THERE IS ALMOST NO PROSPECT THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL CALL AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF CONGRESS, AND THE NEXT REGULAR SESSION WILL BEGIN ON JULY 20, 1974. END SUMMARY.

1. THE 1973 REGULAR SESSION OF THE COLOMBIAN CONGRESS ENDED ON DECEMBER 20 FOLLOWING PRESIDENT PASTRANA'S DECREE OF A FIVE DAY EXTRAORDINARY SESSION IN ORDER TO INSURE ACTION ON IMPORTANT LEGISLATION WHICH HAD NOT BEEN DEBATED IN THE CONGRESS BY DECEMBER 16, THE END OF THE REGULAR SESSION.

2. THE SESSION WAS CHARACTERIZED BY GALLOPING ABSENTEEISM AS CONGRESSMEN REMAINED IN THEIR DISTRICTS TO DO CONTACT WORK WITH LOCAL PARTY LEADERS TO INSURE THAT THEIR NAMES APPEARED IN A HIGH POSITION ON LOCAL ELECTORAL LISTS. IN SPITE OF INCREASING PRESSURE (INCLUDING PUBLICATION OF LISTS OF ABSENT CONGRESSMEN IN THE BOGOTA DAILIES) BY NATIONAL PARTY LEADERS ON CONGRESSMEN TO ATTEND TO THEIR CONGRESSIONAL DUTIES, ABSENTEEISM

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CONTINUED EVEN DURING THE EXTRA DAYS OF THE SESSION. NEVERTHE-

LESS, IN A FINAL RUSH OF ACTIVITY, QUITE TYPICAL OF THE COLOMBIAN CONGRESS WHICH TRADITIONALLY PASSES MOST OF ITS LEGISLATION IN THE LAST FEW DAYS OF ANY SESSION, SOME IMPORTANT LEGISLATION WAS APPROVED.

3. THE PRINCIPAL PIECE OF LEGISLATION PASTRANA PUSHED DURING THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION WAS A REVISED CONCORDAT WHICH WAS PASSED BY THE SENATE AND WILL GO TO THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR DEBATE IN THE NEXT REGULAR SESSION OF CONGRESS BEGINNING JULY 20, 1974.

4. LEGISLATION APPROVED BY THE CONGRESS IN THE 1973 REGULAR SESSION INCLUDED: A). RATIFICATION OF QUITA SUENO TREATY, B). APPROVAL OF THE CONSENSUS OF LIMA ADMITTING VENEZUELA TO THE ANDEAN PACT, C) RATIFICATION OF INTELSAT TREATY, D) THE 1974 BUDGET, E). INCREASED PENALTIES FOR NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING, F). INCREASED PENALTIES FOR KIDNAPPING AND RELATED CRIMES, G) CREATION OF THE INTENDENCIA OF CASANARE, H). REDUCTION OF SENTENCE IN THE BARRANCABERMEJA CASE, I) EXTENSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COFFEE TREATY OF 1968, J). RATIFICATION OF THE PROTOCOL MODIFYING THE WARSAW INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT TREATY, K). RATIFICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION TREATY SIGNED IN MONTREUX, SWITZERLAND ON NOVEMBER 12, 1965.

5. THE FOLLOWING BILLS WERE PASSED BY THE SENATE AND WILL BE DEBATED IN THE CHAMBER DURING THE NEXT REGULAR SESSION:

A. RATIFICATION OF CONCORDAT, B). RATIFICATION OF THE SINGLE NARCOTICS CONVENTION. 6. AMONG THOSE BILLS WHICH THE CONGRESS FAILED TO TAKE FAVORABLE ACTION ON WERE:

A). GOLD MINING EXPRPRIATION, B). THE PETROLEUM BILL (DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE GRADUAL NATIONALIZATION OF PETROLEUM EXPLOITATION AND PRODUCTION). C) BILL TO PREVENT REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF SEATS IN CONGRESS IN 1974, D). SEPARATION OF CUNDINAMARCA AND BOGOTA INTO SEPARATE ELECTORAL DISTRICTS.

7. NO SPECIAL SESSION SEEMS LIKELY DUE TO DECREASING INTEREST IN LEGISLATION AS THE ELECTION DATE NEARS.

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